

TIME OUT TICKET FOR TALK





Group Sales Bring Crowds to Theatre . . . Promote Theatre Via Bus Show Tours . . . Make Theatregoing a Special Event*

Old Techniques Refined

GROUP SALES IN A HARD-TICKET WORLD

Famous Players Canadian Issues a Guide on New Ways to Reach the Patron

Old techniques of selling special shows are being expanded and refined these days, as more and more theatres turn to hard-ticket, reserved-seat engagements of important cinema fare. Selling the special show has now become the technique of Group Sales, and many new techniques have been developed to reach out for new patrons who will attend motion picture performances in groups. Famous Players Canadian, which has been successfully merchandising its hard-ticket attractions, has published a brochure of suggestions and procedures for Group Sales, which can be helpful to theatremen turning to the reserved-seat motion picture for the first time, and which can be adapted by exhibitors for selling to groups on pictures which do not play on a hard-ticket basis. The brochure was prepared by the circuit's experts in this field—Harold Meyers, director of group sales, and Michael King, who as manager of the Imperial Theatre inaugurated many of the circuit's innovations in group sales, who were assisted on the project by George Dixon of the group sales department.

GROUP SALES PHILOSOPHY:

This is an attempt to translate that phrase Group Sales into language that will mean something to exhibitors still new to the idea and the operation.

Group sales basically means two things, and in some way, they have an almost equal importance, (1) Tickets sold (tangible boxoffice results), and (2) Publicity for the attraction and the theatre. The two cannot be easily separated.

A successful group sales campaign should be considered a part of any hard-ticket engagement, and if well-planned

and successfully carried out, will do these things:

1. Increase boxoffice receipts.
2. Lengthen the engagement.
3. Focus attention on your theatre, with all the attendant publicity value.

SALE OF BLOCKS OF TICKETS TO ORGANIZED GROUPS:

All theatre managers, at one time or another, have probably sold out a performance or sold tickets to a performance to a local store or organization. Group sales is basically an extension and an elaboration of this. This kind of selling is sometimes mistakenly thought of as a big-city activity only. This is not true; all our efforts can be reduced or enlarged in scope and made applicable to any size community.

Any project must have a beginning or an end, and the beginning of Group Sales is a salesman. He could be an outside man whose major responsibility is the Group Sales campaign, or in smaller situations he could be you, a theatre manager. Whoever the man, he must be energetic and personable; he must possess a thorough knowledge of the city and fringe area; be conscious of transportation facilities, local conditions, etc. He will be meeting people in all walks of life—businessmen, school principals, teachers, recreation officers, people interested in philanthropy, etc.

A salesman should start his activities well ahead of the projected opening date. His first job is to compile a comprehensive list of groups and schools to be contacted. Your local chamber of commerce, for in-

stance, should be able to provide you with lists of social, civic, professional and fraternal organizations. City directories and telephone books, etc. are sources of information also.

Your list when complete should include: Union and employe organizations, industrial and business firms (noting personnel directors), fraternal organizations, service clubs, professional groups, women's clubs, auxiliary youth groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc., school and church organizations.

When this list has been completed it should be transferred to index cards, so that pertinent individual information can be added. Then the first step is to contact the key personnel through mail and by meetings and telephone calls. The second step is to arrange an invitational screening for them. In many cases this can be a joint press-radio-TV screening. Remember—every member of your audience for this screening is an important opinion maker. These opinion makers represent your potential customers, and therefore are your future publicity agents.

GROUP SALES INDUCEMENTS:

When you attempt to sell to groups, these are the inducements offered them: (1) A group rate, (2) privilege and opportunity of sitting together in a group, (3) convenience of purchase.

Your group sales should be channelled into the Monday-Thursday period, a policy which will, in turn, increase demand for any tickets remaining for this period, and also stimulate week-end trade. Remember, too, that nothing sells like success. If it is hard to get to—then you're in a "sell-out" situation, and those are magic words.

Also, remember that you can accommo-

*Charlton Heston, star of 'Ben-Hur,' visits the University Theatre, Toronto, and inspects a lobby sign recommending theatre parties for the film.

date weekend groups with choice blocks of seats—or, in other words, give them two of the major advantages a group enjoys.

PERSONAL APPROACH:

While initial contact may be made by letter and a follow-up by telephone, sales must be made on a person-to-person basis. This personal approach is the only effective way to encourage and sell theatre parties. In many cases, the picture is partially presold (they know the title); and your screening should complete the selling of the product to your prospect. What you are now selling is *the idea of a theatre party*; and points to stress are that you are selling recreation in a convenient form; also a theatre night is a pleasant and novel addition to any entertainment schedule.

MAIL ORDER SALES:

With the company's (or group's) cooperation, a mail order campaign may be set up within the company. By this we mean that the company will make available to their employees an order coupon, which will be filled out and sent to you with the individual payments, with order coupons addressed to your attention. This latter scheme of course means more detail work on your part as the salesman, but proves an effective method where other arrangements that have been presented have failed to bring the group in.

SALES KIT:

As a group salesman, you should be equipped with the following:

1. Seating chart of the theatre.
2. Breakdown of discount arrangements and figures.
3. Schedule of performances, times and prices.
4. A supply of souvenir books for key contacts, plus publicity aids, reviews, etc.
5. A file of endorsements, thank you letters, photographs of groups, etc., which can be used to influence new prospects.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS:

On all mailing pieces, include mention that you pay special attention to theatre parties.

Endeavor to sell out your opening night. Make it a cultural event in the community, as the premiere can establish a mood and importance that can continue throughout the run. Choose a sponsoring organization for your opening night with great care. Make sure that the sponsoring group can attract an audience that is composed of the top social, civic, professional and political figures in your town. Be absolutely certain that this is an organization geared to selling and promoting and that they will do a thorough publicity campaign on their own. A black tie premiere is advised; and urge the sponsoring group to scale the tickets at considerably more than the boxoffice prices.

WELCOME SIGN—Many organizations and industries have house organs which, obviously, are an excellent publicity outlet for the theatre and the production. Cater to these papers by dressing up their theatre party night. Have a sign made welcoming their group; perhaps they will have photographers there to take pictures of their own VIPs in attendance. (The sign

TICKET ORDER TO BOX OFFICE

From "GROUP SALES"
THEATRE PARTY DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY POLYMER
Toronto

Day of Performance _____ Date _____ Time _____
Please hold the following tickets until (date) _____ (time) _____

Quantity	Location	Price	Total
BOXES # _____		\$ _____	\$ _____
STANDARD # _____		\$ _____	\$ _____
PAINTS # _____		\$ _____	\$ _____
			\$ _____

For the following group's Theatre Party Night:
Name of (individual) _____
Name of Organization _____
Address _____ City _____
Telephone _____ Extension _____
APPROVED: _____
Group Sales Representative _____
Date _____

Famous Players Canadian uses this form which salesmen turn into the boxoffice to indicate the number of tickets to be reserved for specific performances as a result of group sales.

you make should have an interchangeable insert, of course, for subsequent group sales parties.)

SUGGESTION SIGN—There should be a "suggestion" sign in the lobby at all times, and the copy should read: "May We Suggest a Theatre Party . . . as a social or fund-raising activity. Discuss the advantages of attending in a group with the manager or phone _____ for further information."

SUPERMARKET TIEUP—When the production has had a long and successful engagement, a supermarket tieup may be arranged to help extend the run even further and help wind it up with a bang. The supermarket does the following:

1. Extensively advertises the production in both its stores, in its large weekly advertisements, and with the hand-to-hand exchange tickets.
2. Offers "exchange" tickets to customers with the purchase of a certain amount of goods.

The theatre accepts these "exchange" tickets together with the amount of money agreed upon, in exchange for a reserved seat. (Details will vary locally.)

In addition to the publicity mentioned, the supermarket deal by placing tickets directly in the hands of customers creates valuable person-to-person publicity.

NEWSPAPER CARRIER TIEUP—In Toronto, The Star paid \$999.90 for 1,010 tickets for a single performance of "Ben-Hur." The newspaper used the performance as the basis for a carrier-boy subscription campaign, offering a free ticket for each three new subscriptions obtained.

TECHNIQUES OF APPROACH:

CHARITY AND FUND-RAISING ORGANIZATIONS—The major point of interest here is that a theatre party is an ideal way to raise funds. The people in effect are treating themselves while at the same time contributing to a good cause. With this kind of organization, you will find that your contact will be through a central group, and this committee in turn will appoint its own sales people for individual sales.

Advantages you can explain to prospec-

tive fund-raising organizations are: (1) A theatre party is a means of raising funds without soliciting for a straight donation; (2) a theatre party is a social event; (3) by adding an amount of money to the boxoffice price (a contribution) extra funds may be raised in addition to the revenue obtained by group purchase; (4) compared to the usual fund-raising activities (bake sales, bridges, etc.), and the time and labor involved, theatre parties offer a high profit for an easy and enjoyable selling effort.

CONVENTIONS—Your local chamber of commerce will supply you with incoming conventions. Convention groups must be contacted well in advance of their meeting.

SCHOOL AND YOUTH GROUPS—These groups should be contacted through the board of education and youth group leaders, and exhibitors should make certain that these contacts are invited to the special advance screening. An effort should be made to obtain their endorsement for direct solicitation to schools and youth groups.

A special opening performance (called, for example a Teen Premiere) should be scheduled; provided, of course, that the attraction is of a suitable nature . . . Following the success of special youth performances, these may be followed up by "special request" showings, such as summer holiday youth shows, parks and playgrounds shows, etc., which serve as a summer extension of the school performances.

TICKET AGENCIES:

A tremendous source of additional revenue can be derived through ticket agencies established away-from-the-theatre. Ticket sales, like the sale of all other commodities, depend on a widespread sales campaign and availability to the prospective patron. Anxious as the exhibitor may be for extra business, he must be discriminating in his choice of locations. If possible, regularly established ticket agencies and hotels should be used. In fringe area cities, in addition to these locations, you can set up agencies with travel agents, our companies, bus companies, and railroads.

DEPARTMENT STORES—Arrangements can be made so that customers can buy tickets on their regular charge account or on a cash basis. Either way, the boxoffice will settle with the store, preferably on a weekly basis.

HOTELS—Tickets should be on sale at all leading hotels in order to take advantage of the transient population. Here again, a charge arrangement can be established with a weekly settlement.

Tickets for agencies can be controlled in the following manner. A specified number of seats (determined by boxoffice demand, etc.) could be set aside for agency use. Their orders would be placed (by telephone) either as they are received or all at once. The orders should be placed as the boxoffice advocates—either individually or all together, depending on the advance sales. As orders are placed, tickets should be held by the theatre and identified. The agency presents to its patrons an authorized form or voucher which the patrons exchange at the theatre boxoffice at the time of performance for their actual tickets. Depending on the situation, the theatre would set up their own ticket form; or in cases where the agencies normally use a proper form, this could be authorized and used.

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from
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UNIVERSITY THEATRE
Toronto

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Day of Performance _____ Date _____ Time _____

Please hold the following tickets until (date) _____ (time) _____ :

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Total</u>
_____	LOGES @	\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	ORCHESTRA @	\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	BALCONY @	\$ _____	\$ _____
	<u>TOTAL</u>		\$ _____

For the following group's Theatre Party Night:

Name (of individual) _____

Name of Organization _____

Address _____ City _____

Telephone _____ Extension _____

REMARKS:

Group Sales Representative _____.

Date _____.